The Joy of Trials through Which We Are Shaped after Christ

When we are admitted to the school we dreamed of attending, or when we are hired for a position we greatly desired, we cannot help but rejoice. However, this cannot compare to the joy of knowing that we have been admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven, that our names are written in heaven to dwell eternally with the righteous (Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven. Luke 10:20).

It is a great joy to know that you have been admitted to the school of Christ, that you have been chosen by the Lord to work with you, to perfect you, and to make you like Him (My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire. James 1:2–4).

For many, it is unbearable to be persecuted or mocked, but for those who have chosen the values of the Kingdom, it is a joy to know that they are counted worthy to be shaped in the school of suffering (And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. Acts 5:41).

Likewise, for most people, losing the possessions they have worked for is a deeply distressing experience—one that often brings them to the edge of despair. But for those who have chosen the Kingdom of God, it is a reason for joy when the Lord deems them worthy to suffer the loss of the goods necessary for life (... and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods. Hebrews 10:34).

Compared to the joy that the world gives—often following gain or promotion—those who are in the Kingdom rejoice when they go through trials, with the joy that comes from the Holy Spirit (And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost. 1 Thessalonians 1:6; Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you. Colossians 1:24).

When we keep the Word of peace and righteousness, persecution will come—but so will joy (Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:10).

The full joy that comes from the Holy Spirit is what we will find in the eternal Kingdom, and it will be everlasting (And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Isaiah 35:10).

Joy is the result of keeping the Word of Christ. It is a crown of the fruit of the Spirit—the joy of being refined through trials in order to reach patience, kindness, gentleness, love (Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross. Hebrews 12:2).

God's Plan for Man

From reading the Scripture, we can see that in His eternal plan, God intended not only to create beings superior to angels, but His purpose was to create a being in which His nature would be manifested—one made in His image and likeness. He created a being entirely distinct from anything He had created before (And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him. Genesis 1:26– 27).

We can affirm with certainty that when God created man, He had a completely different purpose than He had for the angels, who were created as servants. God decided to make brothers for the Lord Jesus, to populate His Kingdom with beings who would be like His Son.

We have a soul and a spirit. He endowed us with the capacity to think, to reason, to believe, to make decisions, to admire, to love, and to choose. This is because He determined beforehand, in His eternal plan, that we should be made like Him (For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Romans 8:29)

God created us and endowed us with these capacities so that we might use them. It is our responsibility to value them and to work together with Him in order to reach the stature He has appointed. This is the highest calling to which man can aspire (And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Ephesians 4:24).

If the first man was deceived by Satan and his sin passed upon all, this does not mean that there was any flaw in God's plan. All things happened exactly as foreseen in the eternal plan which God prepared with great care, down to the smallest detail.

God begins this work of restoring the image of Christ in man at the moment of new birth, and He has all power to bring us to the perfection required by the standard of His Kingdom (Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6).

God's plan is not limited to a shallow salvation that consists only in repentance (putting off the old man) and the forgiveness of sins. It includes the restoration of the image of

God in us (putting on the new man) and bringing us to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:13).

To illustrate this, we can think of the construction of a house. The builder begins with the foundation, and at the end, the house is completed down to the smallest details.

So it is with God's school. He begins the work of restoring His image in man, and He completes it with precision and care (And he gave some... pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints... till we all come... unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Ephesians 4:11–13).

If man, created by God, is capable of completing what he begins down to the smallest detail, how much more is God able to do so. God has the most perfect school of discipleship, in which He works personally with every man who responds to His call.

He causes us to be born again and transforms us step by step into His image, until we reach the stature of His Son (But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18).

It is a perfect plan, drawn up with great precision, point by point, without missing even the smallest detail. What He begins, He brings to completion (Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:8).

All things that appear in our lives are foreseen by God to work on our character, until we come to resemble the Lord Jesus (And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God... to them who are the called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28).

In His eternal plan, God determined to make us His sons, to grow and become like Him (We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him. 1 John 3:2).

This post is an excerpt from the booklet "The New Birth", which you can read in full, free of charge. More studies and resources for spiritual awakening are available at https://www.unmodifiedword.com.